



Mill Falls Charter School creates life-long learners by providing an intellectually rich and challenging experience delivered through the Montessori tradition. In a safe and peaceful setting, dedicated educators foster students' individuality, creativity, and critical-thinking skills to fully prepare them for future scholastic, civic and personal success.

MFCS Board Meeting Minutes for April 19, 2023

Held @ Mill Falls, 100 William Loeb Drive, Manchester, NH

1. **Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome Public** (Dalton in DePasse's absence)
 - a. Dalton called meeting to order at 6:05pm
 - b. **Roll Call:**
Present: Dalton, Bee, Bashir, Wrubleski, Hollingworth, Corriveau. **Absent:** Trombley, Marr, DePasse, Butterfield. **On Leave:** Connors.
 - c. No public present
2. **Announcements/Updates** (2 min)
 - a. Slight Change in order of agenda due to Board members present and need to vote on matters. Montessori Moment first.
3. **Public Comment:** No public present
4. **Montessori Moment:** Laura Blouin, Lead Montessori our Upper Elementary Olympic Room.
5. **School Reporting**
 - a. **Educational Program Director** (Wrubleski)
 1. **Spirit Week** was in March. We also had **Grandparents/Special Friends Day**. It was the first one since COVID. Over 90 people came and the **Spring Book Fair** going on at the same time. We had over \$6000 in book sales. We get Scholastic Book Dollars (dollars can be used to purchase Scholastic Books) from the Fair income.
 2. Staff had the opportunity to attend an **International Montessori Conference** in Boston (2 days for staff with one extra day for public Montessori admin teams). Laura, Meryl and 12 total staff attended in person. It was an amazing experience. They were able to bond with each other and others over shared experience, passion, and values. Some staff members were only able to attend one day and they dialed in virtually. They held a pot-luck lunch during their PD held the Friday of the Conference. Wrubleski shared that teachers and staff are still feeling burned out from COVID. Meryl and Laure have been having many talks around culture and are encouraging staff to speak to them about things troubling them.
 3. **We are hiring:** 2 lead teacher positions, both in Upper Elementary and Assistants (Kinder and Lower Elementary). Levin and Wrubleski are already thinking through filling these positions. Wrubleski highlighted that finding applicants in education is challenging right now. Finding Lead Teachers is a challenge because this job is more difficult and we are competing against other higher-paying traditional schools/districts. We did get a great applicant from a recent Job Fair, who appears to be a good match. Wrubleski will keep the Board posted on new hires and staff needs.
 - b. **Executive Director** (Levin, please also see attached report)
 1. Levin submitted a **Bean Foundation grant** for social emotional support programming and materials. The Bean Foundation funded us in 2014 related to literacy programming and materials. This ask is focused on partially funding a social worker salary as well as emergent programming (including but not limited to peer mentoring). The Bean Foundation is very tuned into our community and city. Decision is expected in June.

2. \$550,000 Grant update: It has been submitted to the State of NH and gone through the first round of review. We don't have timeline. This may update budgeting for next year.
3. Reminder about event tomorrow at the Puritan hosted by the NH Charter School Alliance & the NH DOE's Charter School Office on 4/20.
4. **Save the Date – Night of Community at Palace Theater June 10th**. The event committee is meeting for its second planning meeting upon return from April vacation.

6. Meeting Business

- a. Approval of Minutes from February 2023 meeting

Motion: Hollingworth motioned to approve Feb 2023 minutes, Bee second. **Vote:** Unanimous

7. Program

a. 2023/24 School Calendar: Discussion and Vote

1. Levin explained the calendar is made – aligning as closely as possible with Manchester School District. However, we have a much more robust professional development schedule with monthly training and collaboration time than the District. In the Calendar, we plan for 4 snow days. This year, School will be in session on President's Day to avoid having staff's final day on Monday, June 17th.

Motion: Bee motioned to approve 2023/24 Calendar; Dalton seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous

b. FY24 School Budget –

1. **Motion:** Based on NH RSA 91-A:3, II a and d, Corriveau motioned to go into closed session, Hollingworth seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous
2. **Motion:** Bee motioned to leave closed session; Dalton seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous

Actions taken: The Board discussed the salary and facility costs related to the 2023/24 schoolyear. There were no actions in the form of votes taken.

8. Committee Reporting:

a. Mission & Charter Committee (Dalton & Committee Members, 5 min)

1. **Night of Community Committee** is meeting May 1st 8:15a (in person or Zoom). Please let Levin know if you are interested in helping. All Trustees are asked to attend.
2. **Connecting Board and Staff:** Dalton suggested scheduling or providing opportunities to connect Staff and Board Members. The goal would be to have time together and establish relationships. Would this be outside of school hours? Could we utilize PD days? It was agreed that Trustees will aim to attend upcoming end-of-year events to begin to make those connections. Levin to send out information about events.
3. Dalton noted that the Board should make it easy for staff to come to the Night of Community by making sure they have tickets purchased on their behalf as has been the practice in past years. Board can buy tickets for staff who are interested in attending. She highlighted how important it is that the staff know that the Board is approachable, and interested in getting to know them and engaging with them.
4. Board discussed opportunities throughout the year for board members to come to events at school. Board would like to have all members commitment to attend something at school quarterly.

9. **Next Meeting:** Scheduled for Wednesday, May 17th, 2023 @ 6pm (Dalton)

10. Adjournment: Motion & Vote

Motion: Hollingworth motioned to adjourn at 7:51pm, Corriveau seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous.



Executive Director's Report

For the April 19, 2023
MFCS School Board Meeting
Submitted by Meryl Levin

Required Reporting

There have not been any significant reporting deadlines since our last meeting. A number of surveys and end-of-year reporting will come due as we move toward June.

Board Related

The **Mission & Charter Committee** and the **Finance Committee** met earlier this month and will be reporting out at our meeting.

An important reminder that on **April 20th**, the NH Alliance for Public Charter Schools - in partnership with the NH Dept of Education - is hosting the **Spring Charter School Leader Summit**. The event is designed to bring together NH Charter School Trustees as well as Administrators. It will be held from **5-7pm at the Puritan Backroom**. As a Board member of the Alliance, I have had a big hand in organizing the event which will feature Keynote Speaker, Ben Feit. Ben is an educational consultant and expert on school governance. There will be some time to network with other charter leaders (Board and Admin). Food and beverages will be provided. If you have not yet registered, please do so by clicking [here](#). I hope Mill Falls will have a great showing!

Facility

The team at school is loving the new key fob system (as mentioned previously, this was paid for by the federal safe school grant). We will be switching over completely to this system by the end of the school year.

Wellness Update

This message continues to be true: Illness (particularly flu, RSV, and strep and an array of misc. viruses) continues to impact our student and staff attendance. This is not unique to Mill Falls, of course, but certainly is being felt widely

Enrollment

Since last we met, we held our final **Lottery Information Tour** and the **Lottery** itself. June Trisciani was our Lottery Official this year. As you may recall, Lottery Day included a HUGE snowstorm. But that did not keep us from going forward with the planned event. Utilizing the skills developed during COVID lottery days, we each worked from our own homes connected via Zoom, and used a lottery app to generate random selections of lottery enrollees. All went off without a hitch.

Following our 2022 Lottery, we sent out **Intent to Enroll** forms to those Kinder families selected in the Lottery. With Project Manager Grace Eaton out on parental leave, we have been working with a short-term sub, Amanda Smart (who was most recently the short-term Lead Montessori sub during another parental leave) to help the Front Office manage this enrollment work. We had a few Kinders who won spots in the lottery, but their families decided not to enroll; those spots were then filled by students at the top of the Kinder wait list from Lottery Day. Additionally, we've been able to offer spots to some Lower Elementary Students from that grade's waitlist to fill spots we know we will have for next year (students not returning). That work will continue into the Upper Elementary soon. As always, some families who say they are coming back on the Intent to Return form, change their mind – so this enrollment work will run throughout the summer so we start the new school year fully enrolled.

We will hold our annual **Kinder Interview Day** on May 5th and will meet with students starting in other grades later in the month. Students currently in Kinder and 3rd grade as well as their parents/guardians will engage in 'Step Up' events in May as well.

Human Resources:

WE ARE HIRING! For the first time in a number of years, we will have some critical openings for next school year. Currently we are looking to hire both **Leads and Assistants**. It has been unusual for us to find previously trained Montessori Leads, so a reminder that we cover training costs. We are also still looking for **paraprofessionals and subs!**

Please take moment to share the link to our website page with the posting – as you may have heard in the news, hiring teachers is no small challenge these days, so we so appreciate your lending a hand! Here's the link to share:

<https://millfalls.org/about-us/employment-opportunities/>

If you know people who may be interested in working with us NEXT year, please direct them to hr@millfalls.org or to Laura and me directly. Thank you for helping to spread the word and direct people to our school!

Earlier this month, Laura and I attended the SNHU educational job fair. Laura has had a few interviews with some of those soon-to-be graduating candidates. Additionally, we have posted our job openings widely including on Linked In, School Spring, NHEDJobs, The NH Center for Nonprofits.

A reminder that each year we distribute contracts for the upcoming school year the Friday before April Vacation.

Financial

FY24 Budget Development is now underway. A draft will be shared at our April meeting. As this is a state budget year, we are waiting to learn more about an increase in charter school funding. HB2 (the NH House budget bill) moved to the senate last week and included a strong funding increase for our schools as part of an overall change to school funding. Now it must play out in the Senate before we know what if any increase in funding we can expect to see for next year. The current budget draft I will share will utilize numbers put forth by the DOE (only shows a tiny increase) until the state budget is approved.

SAMS/DUNS: As required, we have completed the annual renewal in the Federal Registry which allows us to access federal funds.

Title Funds: We continue our regular flow of expense reimbursement in relation to various title funding grants for Title I (support for our students needing intervention), Title II (staff professional development); Title III (support for our English Language Learners); Title IV a flexible area of funding for student and staff support. We are awaiting information about allotted funds for next school year.

Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant Update: As background, during the last administration, the state received an enormous grant of \$46million for charter expansion, replication and to open new charters. Previously, we discussed the plan for Mill Falls to apply for the most recent round of Federal CSP Grant funds. I completed our grant application in late March which details a programmatic expansion summarized in brief on our grant's cover form, this way:

The development of our Montessori Cultural Curricular Integration (MCCI) seeks to codify a robust cross-curricular integration of core subject areas resulting in hands-on projects that connect science, language, technology, design, math, and the arts within our Montessori teaching and learning model. This is the natural next phase for our public Montessori program, as we embark on our second decade of operation. The project

will establish a deliberate structure for staff to guide their students in experiencing the interconnectedness between the lessons they learn in school and how that links to the real world.

MCCI will work in support of our Montessori-forward mission to help our students reach their highest personal potential by developing transferable problem-solving skills - often through a collaborative learning model - which allows them to see larger context and applications for lessons large and small. By deliberately making space for social skill development, the MCCI will continue our practice of enabling our students to relax into their learning, and find joy in the process. The MCCI model will increase engagement and rigor and will provide opportunities for student leadership skill development. Ultimately, this will also provide additional opportunities for students to demonstrate their proficiency / mastery of subjects through creative means alongside the benchmark assessments.

Fund usage will include salaries for the project's Curriculum Coordinator and project team; acquisition of teaching and learning tools and resources and related furniture and, as necessary, training for use of those resources; professional development for the Coordinator and all staff in relation to the project goals; updating of marketing materials and outreach methods.

We are awaiting word on the DOE's decision to fund our project. The full request was for \$550,000.

Special Education: Special Education reimbursements from sending districts continue to arrive in a timely manner. We have sent Manchester the 2023/24 renewal of our standing special education service agreement.

MFCS Community Building & Volunteerism

Calendar Raffle: I am so pleased to share that our Fundraising Calendar Raffle was a HUGE success. We surpassed the goal set by the Raffle Committee and reached over \$12,500 in sales! Thanks to great prizes collected by the committee and a solid response from our school families (kiddos and adults) for making that happen. The kids were quite into it, and as you know the two top selling classrooms will get group prizes (pizza party and movie for first prize; extra recess for second prize). Additionally, each student who sold calendars were entered in a raffle and a prize given to a student at each of our program levels. The prizes were \$75 gift certificates to Scholastic so they could choose books they will enjoy.

Night of Community: Just after April Vacation, we will hold our first planning meeting for the **Night of Community** event. This end-of-year adult gathering will be held on the evening of **Saturday, June 10th at the Palace Theatre's Spotlight Room**. In the past, this event has generated funds similar in size to the Calendar Raffle through ticket sales, art auction, silent auction, and fund-a-need. All students of past committee members have graduated from Mill Falls, so we are starting with a new crew. If you enjoy event planning and would like to lend a hand, please contact me directly. I do hope that Trustees will be able to attend this event that aims to bring together ALL the adults in our community – staff, parents/guardians/grandparents, and trustees!

Laura will soon be meeting with interested parents/guardians to organize our beloved **Field Day on May 26th**. If you are interested in participating, please let her know! Additionally, in recognition of **Earth Day**, (weather permitting) staff and students will be doing a spring clean-up / trash collection on campus followed by individual classroom crafts. Again, if you are interested in joining us, please let me know!

Our weekly **Read-Ins** continue to be well attended by parents/guardians, grandparents and friends and are featured in our weekly newsletter. If any of you would like to swing by for a read in, please let us know!

Our **Grandparents & Special Friends Day** on March 23rd was also extremely well attended! We'd not held that gathering since the spring of 2019, so it was wonderful to warmly welcome guests back into our space. Light breakfast treats and tea/coffee greeted them as the group gathered, and then they spent the majority of their time in the classrooms with our students. Our guestlist included our former Board Chair,

Roland Martin, who was a guest of his nephew who is now enrolled at school. The Spring Bookfair was also going on and the intentional confluence helped to generate one of our most successful bookfairs yet!

The **final Montessori Morning Tour of 2023** took place on March 8, and once again included a great group of guests. Shout out to Sara Bee and Danielle Dalton for helping to build the tour which included people from SNHU and The Derryfield School. I continue to ask that Trustees connect me with people they feel we should bring in for Tours. Please connect me with those people via email, or call me to discuss folks you'd like to invite. Thank you!

MFCS Child Care Program:

There are currently 10 children enrolled in our Before Care Program which runs daily from 7-8:15am and is staffed by Mill Falls Staff members. We are also open for drop ins.

Foundation News: The Foundation currently holds \$546,079 in its accounts.

DRAFT